



News Release

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Service Announces Proposed Amendment to the Oklahoma Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is announcing the Notice of Availability (NOA) for a proposed amendment to the Oklahoma Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for the lesser prairie-chicken. Public comments will be accepted on the proposed amendment through January 21, 2014.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) has applied for an amendment to their existing CCAA, to increase enrollment from 200,000 acres to 400,000 acres by 2037 throughout the 14 Oklahoma Counties covered by the CCAA. Approval and implementation of the amended CCAA will extend a landscape-level conservation program ultimately resulting in an increase in the number of lesser prairie-chickens on the ground.

On January 25, 2013, the Service approved the Oklahoma CCAA and issued a final environmental assessment (EA) and enhancement of survival permit. The ODWC CCAA covers activities on non-federal lands in Oklahoma that are intended to conserve, restore and/or enhance habitat for the lesser prairie-chicken, improve the species population and reduce threats to the lesser prairie-chicken. The CCAA is in effect for 25 years in Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Major, Roger Mills, Texas, Washita, Woods and Woodward counties, Oklahoma.

CCAAs are voluntary and provide non-federal landowners the opportunity to implement conservation practices that address specific threats with assurances that, if the species is listed, they can continue to manage their land as outlined in their agreements with no additional requirements. CCAAs are also in place in Texas and New Mexico for the lesser prairie-chicken.

For additional information, contact the Acting Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oklahoma Ecological Services Field Office, 9014 E. 21st Street, Tulsa, OK, 74129 and by telephone 918-581-7458. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

The lesser prairie-chicken is a species of prairie grouse that currently occupies a five-state range that includes Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado. The species needs large areas of relatively intact native grasslands and prairies to thrive. The vast majority of lesser prairie-chicken habitat occurs on privately owned land across its five-state range. We cannot restore, protect and reconnect habitat for the lesser prairie-chicken without the voluntary assistance of private landowners.

The Service's priority is to make implementation of the ESA less complex, less contentious and more effective. We seek to accelerate recovery of threatened and endangered species across the nation, while making it easier for people to coexist with these species. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, visit <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfws, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws>.

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